



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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HOCKEY'S FLORIDA PANTHERS TO BENEFIT ENDANGERED NAMESAKE

The Florida Panthers, a new, Fort Lauderdale-based National Hockey League team, is joining with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in a hat trick to benefit the team's namesake, the endangered Florida panther, according to the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To start with, Panthers owner H. Wayne Huizenga is donating \$34,000 to support Florida panther conservation projects. This will be matched by \$16,000 from the Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of natural resources.

Huizenga also will be donating all proceeds from the rental of an educational hockey video to further assist Florida panther recovery efforts. The video will rent for 50 cents at Blockbuster Video stores, and the Foundation has agreed to match 50 percent of these contributions.

Finally, Huizenga has issued an open invitation to the public and corporate sponsors to support his "Panther Saves" program. Each save made by a Panther goaltender during a game will result in a donation to Florida panther projects.

In making the announcement, Acting Service Director Richard Smith said, "These measures will raise not only funds but public

(more)

awareness concerning the current plight of the Florida panther. This venture will serve as an excellent model for other partnerships that combine the resources of a variety of interests - sports, entertainment, business, and conservation."

Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Amos S. Eno added, "It is encouraging to see professional sports, corporate America, and a conservation organization joining hands to bring attention to our rare and endangered species."

Funds raised by the Florida Panthers will support a variety of conservation programs aimed at protecting and acquiring panther habitat, raising public awareness, and improving the species' genetic diversity.

Only 30 to 50 Florida panthers are believed to exist in the wild in swamps and forests of southern Florida. Loss of habitat, environmental contamination, and highway deaths continue to threaten the species.

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